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Current Affairs - 21 February 2025

SOLAR CORONAL HOLES



Recently, a new study has accurately estimated the physical parameters of thermal and magnetic field structures of solar coronal holes.

- Coronal holes are dark regions in X-ray and extreme ultraviolet images of the Sun.
- These were **discovered in the 1970s** by X-ray satellites.

Features of Solar Coronal Holes:

- They appear dark because they are **cooler, less dense region** than the surrounding plasma and are regions of open, unipolar magnetic fields.
- They have **open magnetic field lines** and are hence important for understanding the interplanetary medium and space weather.
- Coronal holes can last between a few weeks to months. The holes are not a unique phenomenon, appearing throughout the **sun's approximately 11-year solar cycle**.
- They can **last much longer during solar minimum** – a period of time when activity on the Sun is substantially diminished, according to NASA.

Significance of Solar Coronal Holes:

- The occurrences of coronal holes are associated with **disturbances in the Earth's ionosphere**, the layer of the atmosphere that reflects and modifies the radio waves, leading to further communication issues.
 - They have significant influence on **space weather that affects satellites**, as well as the Indian **summer monsoon rainfall**.
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WHO IS AN ADVOCATE-ON-RECORD (AOR)?



The Supreme Court recently held that Advocates-on-Record (AoRs) bear full responsibility for the accuracy of petitions filed before the Court, even if the drafts are prepared by other advocates.

- The concept of AoR was **introduced by the SC** with the power given to it **under Article 145(1)** of the Indian Constitution, which states that the SC may, from time to time, make rules for regulating the practices and procedures in the court.
- An AoR is a **legal professional** who is **entitled to represent clients and plead** for them **in the SC**.
- It is a specific category of advocates with **rights of audience in the SC**.
- An AoR has the **exclusive right to file and conduct cases in the SC**.
 - **No advocate other than AoR can appear and plead** in any matter **unless an AoR instructs him..**
- **Roles and Responsibilities:**
 - **Only an AoR is authorised to file a Vakalatnama** on behalf of a client in the SC. The Vakalatnama is a crucial document that grants the advocate the authority to represent the client.
 - **All the procedural aspects need to be completed by AOR** with the assistance of a registered clerk.
 - This includes **drafting and filing petitions, applications,** and other legal documents.
 - **Any notice or order/correspondence by the SC is sent to the AoR.**
 - An AoR is **personally liable for the due payment of all fees/charges** payable to the court.
- Order IV rule 5 of the Supreme Court Rules, 2013, lays down the **requirements to be fulfilled to become an AoR**. They are as follows:



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- The Advocate is required to be **enrolled with any State Bar Council**.
- The Advocate is required to have a **prior experience of at least 4 years**.
- The Advocate has undergone a **training of 1 year under a senior AoR**.
- The Advocate has **appeared for the examination** conducted by the SC.
- The Advocate is required to have **an office in Delhi within a radius of 10 miles from the SC house** and **give an undertaking to employ a clerk**, who shall be a registered clerk, within one month of being registered as an AoR.
- Once registered, an AOR is **issued a unique identification number** that must be used on all documents filed in the SC.

WHAT IS PARKINSON'S DISEASE (PD)?



A breakthrough study has uncovered a hidden player in Parkinson's disease—24-OHC, a cholesterol metabolite that fuels the spread of harmful protein clumps in the brain.

- It is a **progressive neurodegenerative disorder** that **primarily affects movement**.
- It **causes nerve cells** (neurons) in parts of the brain to **weaken, become damaged**, and die, **leading** to symptoms that include **problems with movement**, tremor, stiffness, and impaired balance.
- As symptoms progress, people with PD may have difficulty walking, talking, or completing other simple tasks.
- Although many brain areas are affected in Parkinson's disease, the **most common symptoms result from the loss of neurons** in an area near the base of the brain called the **substantia nigra**.
 - The **neurons in this area produce dopamine**.
 - **Dopamine** is the chemical messenger that **transmits signals in the brain to produce smooth, purposeful movement**.



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- Most people with PD have lost 60 to 80% or more of the dopamine-producing cells in the substantia nigra by the time symptoms appear.
- Lack of dopamine causes the slowed movements and tremors symptoms of Parkinson's disease.
- **Who does it affect?**
 - The risk of developing Parkinson's disease naturally increases with age, and the **average age** at which it starts is **60 years old**.
 - It's slightly **more common in males**.
 - **Diagnosis:** Currently, **no blood laboratory or radiological tests** are available to diagnose Parkinson's disease.
 - **Treatment:** There's **no cure** for this disease, but treatments can help significantly improve your symptoms.

DINESH KHARA COMMITTEE



The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) recently set up a seven-member committee headed by former chairman of SBI Dinesh Khara to examine proposed amendments to the Insurance Act, 1938, and suggest a framework for its implementation.

- It is a high-powered **seven-member committee set up** by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDAI).
- **Purpose:** To review **proposed amendments to the Insurance Act of 1938** and recommend a regulatory framework for their implementation.
- The committee is formed as the Union government prepares to introduce the Insurance Amendment Bill to Parliament.
- The **proposed amendments include increasing** the foreign direct investment (FDI) cap **in the insurance sector** from 74% to **100%**, reducing paid-up capital requirements, introducing a composite licence system, and streamlining regulatory processes.



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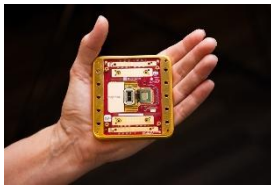
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- The committee's mandate is strictly limited to reviewing the proposed changes and determining their implementation through regulations and circulars, without suggesting additional amendments.

Insurance Act, 1938:

- It serves as the **primary regulatory framework** for the country's **insurance industry** and led to the **establishment of IRDAI**.
- The Act defines the scope of life, general, and health insurance in the country and regulates the role of insurance agents.
- It regulates the relationship between an insurer, its policyholders, shareholders, and the regulator - IRDAI.

WHAT IS MAJORANA 1?



Microsoft released Majorana 1, the world's first quantum chip built on a topological core, recently.

- It is the **quantum computing chip** developed by Microsoft.
- The Majorana 1 is designed to make quantum computing more practical, faster, and reliable.
 - **Quantum computers process information** differently from traditional computers, **using** quantum bits (**qubits**) instead of regular bits.
 - **Qubits can exist in states 0, 1, or both simultaneously** (superposition).
 - This allows them to solve complex problems much faster, but **qubits are extremely fragile and prone to errors**.
- **Majorana 1 leverages a new material** called a **topoconductor** or a topological superconductor, which **helps create a special kind of qubit** that is more stable and less prone to losing information.
- Majorana 1 **relies on a subatomic particle** called the **Majorana fermion**, which was theorised as existing by scientist Ettore Majorana in 1937.



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- The Majorana 1 chip is made of a material made from indium arsenide and aluminum to create what Microsoft calls the “world’s first topoconductor.”
- This could finally allow quantum computers to scale up to millions of qubits and help solve real-world problems like designing better medicines, reducing pollution, and creating materials that can repair themselves.

UN-HABITAT



UN-HABITAT

Recently, C40 Cities and UN-Habitat have announced a landmark partnership to transform urban planning.

- It is the **focal point for all urbanization** and human settlement matters **within the UN system**.
- It is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote **socially and environmentally sustainable towns** and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all.
- It works with partners to build inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and communities.
- UN-Habitat promotes urbanization as a positive transformative force for people and communities, reducing inequality, discrimination and poverty.
- **Governance structure:** It is a **three-tier structure** made up of the UN-Habitat Assembly, the Executive Board and the Committee of Permanent Representatives.
 - **UN-Habitat Assembly** is a universal body composed of the **193 member** states of the United Nations and convenes **every four years**.
 - **The Executive Board** is composed of **36 member** states elected by the UN-Habitat Assembly and **meets three times a year** to increase the oversight by Member States of UN-Habitat operations.
 - **The Committee of Permanent Representatives of UN-Habitat (CPR)** meets twice every four years in an open-ended manner.
- **Headquarters:** Nairobi



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DIGITAL BRAND IDENTITY MANUAL



Recently, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) launched the Digital Brand Identity Manual (DBIM) and the inaugural Chief Information Officer (CIO) Conference 2025.

- It aims to establish a **standardized and cohesive digital identity** across all government ministries and platforms, enhancing accessibility, inclusivity, and citizen engagement.
- The primary objective of the DBIM is to create a **unified and consistent digital brand** for the Government of India.
- It is part of the “Gov.In: Harmonisation of Government of India’s Digital Footprint” initiative.
- The initiative focuses on **simplifying and standardizing government websites**, ensuring that citizens from diverse backgrounds can easily navigate and access essential government services.
- By standardizing elements such as color palettes, typography, and iconography, the manual not only ensures uniformity in look and feel but also strengthens the integrity of government-hosted data.
- This cohesive approach will enable government departments to present a compelling and **trustworthy brand presence**, both nationally and globally.
- The guidelines extend beyond websites to cover mobile applications and social media platforms, reinforcing a seamless user experience across all digital touch points.
- **Features of DBIM initiative:**
 - **DBIM Toolkit** for ensuring uniformity in digital identity
 - **In CMS Platform** for streamlined website management
 - **Central Content Publishing System (CCPS)** for centralized content governance
 - **Social Media Campaign Guidelines** to standardize digital communication

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LOKPAL AND LOKAYUKTAS ACT, 2013: STRENGTHENING ANTI-CORRUPTION FRAMEWORK IN INDIA

- The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, was introduced to combat **corruption at the highest levels of government** in India.
- It provides for the establishment of the **Lokpal at the central level** and **Lokayuktas in states**, empowering them to investigate complaints against public officials, including the Prime Minister, Ministers, and Members of Parliament.
- The Act was a result of prolonged public movements against corruption, particularly the **India Against Corruption movement** led by **Anna Hazare**.
- It aims to bring greater transparency and accountability in governance by establishing an **independent anti-corruption body** with investigative powers.

About Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013

- The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, establishes a **multi-member anti-corruption body** with the authority to investigate **allegations of corruption against high-ranking public officials**.
- The Lokpal is responsible for handling cases at the central level, while Lokayuktas are set up by **individual states** to deal with corruption cases at the state level.
- **Key Features of the Act:**
 - **Establishment of Lokpal:** A central institution headed by a chairperson and up to eight members, including judicial and non-judicial members.
 - **Jurisdiction:** Covers the Prime Minister (with certain exceptions), Ministers, MPs, and Group A and B officers of the central government.
 - **Lokayuktas in States:** Every state is required to establish a Lokayukta to investigate corruption allegations against state officials.
 - **Inquiry and Prosecution Powers:** Lokpal has power to order inquiries, recommend prosecution, and direct disciplinary action.

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- **Whistleblower Protection:** The Act provides safeguards for whistleblowers reporting corruption cases.

Significance of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act

- **Strengthening Anti-Corruption Measures**
 - The Act provides an independent **watchdog mechanism** to investigate corruption cases at **both central and state levels**, ensuring greater transparency in public office.
- **Public Accountability**
 - By bringing top government officials, including the **Prime Minister and MPs, under scrutiny**, the Act reinforces **public trust in governance**.
- **Empowering Lokpal with Investigative Powers**
 - The Lokpal has the authority to conduct **independent inquiries and recommend prosecution** without needing prior government approval.
- **Ensuring State-Level Vigilance**
 - The requirement to set up **Lokayuktas in every state** strengthens **state-level anti-corruption mechanisms**.

Challenges and Criticisms

- **Delay in Lokayukta Implementation:** Many states have **not yet appointed Lokayuktas**, weakening the state-level anti-corruption framework.
 - **Limited Investigative Autonomy:** The **CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation)**, which assists in investigations, still functions under government control, affecting its independence.
 - **Lack of Public Awareness:** Many citizens are **unaware of Lokpal's role and how to file complaints**, reducing its effectiveness.
 - **Political Interference:** Critics argue that **appointments to Lokpal are influenced by the ruling government**, impacting its impartiality.
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